



*Improving Lives • Finding the Cure*

March 9, 2012

The Honorable Gail Haines  
Committee Chair, House Health Policy Committee  
124 North Capitol Avenue  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Committee Chair Haines:

On behalf of the International Myeloma Foundation (IMF), the oldest and largest foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life of multiple myeloma patients while working toward prevention and a cure, I am writing to strongly urge the House Health Policy Committee to vote in favor of SB 540/541 and HB 5132/ 5133. This legislation would eliminate the cost disparity between oral and intravenous anti-cancer medications ensuring access to treatment for all cancer patients.

Access to effective, medically-appropriate oral anti-cancer medications will assist in safeguarding the immediate and long-term financial stability of patients. New, FDA-approved oral anti-cancer medications target cancer cells directly and are often easier for patients to tolerate. This results in fewer side effects allowing patients to continue working during and after treatment, which helps employers avoid costly issues of turnover, missed days at work, short and long-term disability, caregiver absenteeism, and replacement worker costs. Plus, oral anti-cancer medications permit patients a continued quality of life with fewer disruptions of day to day activities.

Although it is not well known, multiple myeloma (or myeloma) is the second most common blood cancer worldwide. It is a cancer of cells in the bone marrow that affects production of red blood cells, white cells and stem cells. Each year approximately 20,000 Americans are diagnosed and 10,000 lose their battle with this disease. Myeloma points the way to the future of cancer care. We have seen dramatic and important advances in treatments for myeloma that are now moving into lymphomas and leukemia and even into solid tumors. However, the needless disparity in coverage between oral drugs and intravenous chemotherapy is a critical issue for many of our patients.

There is currently no cure for multiple myeloma, but there are a handful of effective treatment options available, two of which are oral. These oral treatments do NOT have IV substitutes, forcing patients to absorb thousands of dollars per month out-of-pocket or forgo treatment altogether. If passed, SB 540/541 would ensure that cancer patients no longer have to worry about accessing and affording care when faced with a cancer diagnosis.

The IMF believes patients and their doctors should be able to take advantage of the treatment that is best for the patient, and not have to select their treatment based on insurance coverage. Therefore, I strongly urge the committee to please vote in favor of SB 540/541 and HB 5132 / 5133 to ensure equality of access and insurance coverage for ALL cancer patients in Michigan. Fifteen other states plus the District of Columbia have passed oral chemotherapy access bills. It's time for Michigan to join the ranks.

Sincerely,

*Susie Novis*

Susie Novis  
President  
International Myeloma Foundation

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